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## Potpourri world

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Diverse unconnected news wafts in digitally, through electronic media, mobile phone, text messages, social networking, when travelling. As I was struggling to put some form to the last 15 days' happenings of the world, my wife was changing the potpourri in a wooden bowl near my writing table. The word I searched for streaked in, potpourri!

Any collection of miscellaneous, diverse items is potpourri. English, Spanish and French have the same meaning for pot, while pourri is French for rotten. Since the 17th century, fresh flowers and herbs are gathered in France through spring and summer, dried and sea salt added. The concoction that ferments or moulds is stirred, spices and scent-preserving fixatives added in autumn, and the mixture put in perforated pots. The benefit rotting flowers give is room fragrance; a potpourri of happenings delivers undulating emotions, both cheerful and cheerless. Let's travel for a potpourri of global happenings.

**Greek TV slap:** Greece, economically, politically troubled. Having worked for a Greek company continuously for 24 years, I greatly admire lovely Greece and Greeks. As I switched the TV on, extreme right politician Ilias Kasidiaris, was lunging forward, throwing water at Syriza Party's Rena Dourou across from him. He then stood up and repeatedly slapped Communist

Party's Liana Kanelli during a political debate. Bewildered at how two women were physically attacked, I turned to my Greek friend Theodore. He messaged back, "Greeks invented democracy, but it cannot be applied to modern Greeks. Politics is a derby race today. Every Greek acts, explains and translates democracy for himself, not for common public welfare." He added ironically, "I definitely prefer enlightened dictatorships like Cuba's Fidel Castro and Venezuela's Hugo Chavez to democratic anarchy."

**Bengali TV:** Turning on a Bengali channel suddenly threw me off balance. Prominent, beautiful TV news anchor Moupia was talking very seriously, confidence enwrapped with embarrassment in her voice, about Pinki Pramanik's "lingo pariksha" (sex examination). Indian woman star athlete Pinki, winner of gold medals and several Asian and Commonwealth Games honours, was arrested when her female live-in partner exposed her to be a man. The arresting West Bengal police officer said the victim alleged that Pinki continuously raped her, promised to marry her but later refused. Gender test on Pinki on June 20 was inconclusive as she reportedly has both male and female reproductive organs. Just after Pinki's news came the commercial, Janani Tel (oil of Japan). A snake-charmer with typical music arouses a sleeping cobra and sparks fly, very graphically indicating a kind of Viagra medicine. I've observed these ads come regularly after political controversies, disaster or entertainment programs, and only on Bengali TV, not elsewhere. Does Janani Tel's heavy

media investment mean the product is working so well in Bengal?

Zapping to another Bengali channel, I witnessed an “anchor hunt” show. It undoubtedly had an innovative format. Very surprisingly, highly regarded senior members of different political parties were the test subjects for aspiring young TV anchor candidates. A jury of silver screen actors and existing TV anchor judged them. This new exam format may be good for TRPs, may expose media-hungry politicians too, but should candidates be humiliate in public? Will jury members like being badgered the way they criticized future TV news anchors?

**Uncertain First Lady:** The absolute majority French President Francois Hollande’s Socialist Party won in the legislative elections allows him to govern independently, but its his political love triangle that global media is abuzz with. The most important candidate he’d openly supported lost the election. That was his Party’s 2007 French Presidential candidate Segolene Royal, who’s also his ex-partner and mother of his 4 children. Segolene was expected to occupy the third most important Government position after President and Prime Minister, as the Speaker of the National Assembly when she wins legislative election from La Rochelle. She was ahead in a triangular fight but the run-off saw dissident Socialist Olivier Falorni get 63% votes.

Segolene’s backstabbing defeat is traced to Hollande’s current partner, journalist Valerie Trierweiler. Taking a public swipe at Segolene, she tweeted, “Courage to Olivier Falorni who has not been unworthy, who has battled alongside La Rochelle residents for so many years with unselfish commitment” on June12. This created havoc, Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault told Valerie to “know her place.” The President’s children have allegedly refused to speak to the First Lady. Valerie finally capitulated, admitting she “made a mistake.” After her electoral defeat Segolene

felt “murdered” by Valerie’s “violent blow” and quoted French writer Victor Hugo: “Traitors always pay for their treachery in the end.” Is the First Lady’s motive to always remain in the limelight?

**Media fixation on criminal case:** The liberty to carry a gun perhaps keeps Americans in a perpetually agitated state. So making a criminal courtroom spectacular with high media attention is their forte. *Jerry Sandusky’s* trial on June22 for serial *child molestation* found him guilty on 45 out of 48 counts of sexual abuse. This could get him 422 years of imprisonment. Isn’t this kind of sentence weird? Are Americans inventing some new drug to make prisoners survive that long?

**Indian Presidential game:** India’s Congress party Presidential nominee, Pranab Mukherjee, is almost sure to win. Before quitting as Finance Minister and from Congress party, he said, “Soon I’ll not be a political entity” and appealed to all elected MPs and MLAs to vote him President. He attended the Congress Working Committee meeting on June25, albeit for the last time. In Indian democracy is it possible to be “apolitical” after being a party politician for 4 decades? Media and political parties are in high pitch, but do common people understand this potpourri in spite of being voters? Do 480 million below-poverty-line people care who’s going to live luxuriously in the world’s largest Presidential residence? Surely it won’t make any dent in their livelihood possibilities?

Real potpourri is preserving natural fragrance in fermented dried flowers. Modern potpourri is as colourful but artificial, yet retaining pourri’s real meaning, which is rotten. I wonder if all these episodes above are real or artificial potpourri?

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